

Eyes of Sorrow

by yume girl 91

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Summary: The ghosts of the deceased haunt Chizuru as she tries to continue life after their deaths..after series oneshot. Implied pastHijikataxChizuru & slight SaitoxChizuru

Eyes of Sorrow

The smells of frying tempura, other spicier scents waft lazily, scenting the air into something that stirs her senses. _Western influences. The western world_. Chizuru's eyes flutter open, for a moment her hand longs to linger for a short weapon no longer there. Her sharp senses once - attuned under special tutelage, picked up, discerning the movements in the kitchens beyond the small back corridor.

Another day. She sighed, brushing messy black bangs from her eyes. Her hair's grown longer than in those days. Chizuru's hands calloused from rough work slide upward, gathering the strands into a man's hairstyle. She paused and frowned at herself. _Old habits died a slow death_. Much slower, she fixed her hair in a woman's style, putting her yukata to rights.

Once that was done, she exited out into the small corridor, heading for the kitchen of the small restaurant to begin the day's work.

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Six months. A year maybe. She can't tell anymore. The small restaurant sits at a corner of a busy boulevard. Western dress is more typical among clientele. Her throat closes up when she goes out with the first tray. There's a group of men in the corner. One of them could be Harada-san with a belly-aching laugh- or - or that one with the easy smirk and flashing eyes could be Okita-san, always a trickster.

The ghosts linger phantom-like over the living. Like a dream Chizuru can't quite bring herself to awaken from. She calls their order, a tremulous smile on her lips. They cease their talk and eye her as Harada-san and Okita-san wouldn't have - well, perhaps Okita-san would've just to make her uncomfortable. The third member of their little group, she can't bring herself to look at - it hurts too much.

"Yeah, girlie.."

She keeps her head down, thankful for the dim lighting. The dust lays heavy on the floor, the wood of the aged table creaks with the weight of the tray. Chizuru slides the bowls across, jerkily, desperate to get away.

"Enjoy your meal." She chirps with false cheer, glad inside when the final burden is gone from the tray. The seconds pass, she was ready to make a get away - when the one who sounds like Harada-san rests a sweaty thick-fingered hand on her wrist, "why so eager to go, girlie? How about you an' me-"

"Makino." Said the third one with just a hint of warning. They locked eyes furiously. Chizuru didn't dare lift her chin to watch the internal battle. Eventually the sweaty grip lessened; relieved, she stumbled away, recalling to bow quickly before heading to the back.

Things like that happened often - the kindly elder couple whom had hired her, said it was because she was a pretty young lady. She smiled at the plain yukatas and obis, the small hair ornaments- she would have given everything just to be among them again.

That's all life had boiled down to.

Smiles she formed without a second thought, a life she walked through day after day, flitting like a shadow in. She had promised to Hijikata-san's last breath, she would live without tears for them.

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Chizuru does. The kitchen is wide, with two brick stoves and tiny counters for preparation. She rinsed vegetables in cold water, seeming to see larger fingers turning the green stalks over, chattering about an onion - trying to make her smile. Someone else had been injured that day, Okita-san told her not to worry - she did laugh a little when she cut the pungent leeks, he let her do it so she'd have an excuse to cry.

She cut them now, wiping her tears with the back of her hand.

It was just the onion, she thought with a smile, her chest aching.

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Two moons pass.

Everything is a routine now. When she realizes she's almost broken the habit of fixing her old hairstyle, she frowns, reversing the last

few motions until she does it every day.

Habit grows thin - but it's fragile, she worries like her memory.

Would she forget one day, _Hijikata-san's smile?_

The thought frightens her, for it would be like losing a part of herself.

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A while passes, each day Chizuru reminds herself as customers come and go, about the various things she remembered from the Shinsengumi officers._ Hijikata-san shaking his fist at Heisuke over something trivial. Sannan-san sighing over Shinpachi and Heisuke's fights. Okita-san's laughter_ - the good things before defeat, death and everyone was lost.

In that way, summer passed into Fall, leaves scattered and were swept by the broom she pushed across the threshold. A breeze rustled the ends of her hair fastened by a green ribbon. Chizuru paused when it gusted harder, sending a spray of fresh leaves to spiral in the wake of a tall man's approach. Her upraised hand lingered, holding the strands of hair from her eyes, their gazes meeting in a hailstorm of memory.

"Saito-san?" Chizuru murmured, unsure if it was simply another ghost from memory.

"Yukimura."

The ghosts of the Mibu wolves had never spoken before.

The broom clattered to the ground from her hands, abandoning everything she had ever feared, Chizuru ran forward, catching him about the waist, clasping handfuls of the crisp civilian's clothing he wore. She buried her head against his chest, feeling Saito-san stiffen slightly at the contact then slowly, lightly return the embrace.

"You came back..." _you're alive. Oh thank kami, one has lived!_

"Yes." Being of few words he remained, yet with a tiny smile she didn't see, added somewhat drier. "I see Souji was wrong. You don't seem to be a magnet for trouble." That, she flushed at, able to smile when she finally - let go, knowing he wouldn't disappear before her eyes like the dead and stepped back, gesturing warmly to the tiny restaurant.

Finally it seemed to her, the world had regained meaning.

-Finis-

Disclaimer: don't own HSK.

AN: I've seen up to ep3 of ssnl and skimmed over ep summaries and character wikis ^^; I know it's more or less hinted that they all

died ; _ ; but it bothered me as to what was going to happen to Chizuru after the series end hence this short piece of ffic. ^^

No flames!

Reviews are a treat~

End
file.